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ABSTRACT

St. Petersburg Junior College's (SPJC's) College for Kids program was initiated in fall 1981. Over the years, the program evolved from an afterschool program for gifted students into a summer program suitable for all students from ages 6 through 12. The program operates between 8:30 in the morning and 2:30 in the afternoon for 9 or 10 weeks, with extended care available until 5:30 in the afternoon at several locations. Students may attend for 1 week, all 10 weeks, or any combination of weeks, and engage in hands-on creative activities under the supervision of state certified elementary school teachers. During fall 1989, the 1,534 parents of the previous summer's participants were surveyed regarding their satisfaction with program management, program curriculum, teacher attitudes, student-teacher interaction, and student enjoyment. Study findings, based on a 38.9% response rate, included the following: (1) 64.2% of the respondents indicated that this was the first summer that their children had attended, and only 11.3% of the summer 1989 participants had attended three or more summers; (2) overall, participants attended the program 3 weeks or less; (3) the most effective recruitment tool was the program brochure mailed directly to the home; (4) 78.9% indicated an intention to send their children to College for Kids again in summer 1990; (5) the majority of the students were male (52.7%), attended public school (79.4%), and were aged 6 through 8 years (61.3%); (6) at least 70% of the parents expressed satisfaction with the program curriculum, balance of activities, teacher's attitude, discipline, program challenge, and student enjoyment; and (7) 25.4% of the parents regularly used the extended care option. (Author/JMC)

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
ABSTRACTS
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EVALUATION OF THE COLLEGE FOR KIDS PROGRAM

Volume 4, Number 4 *June, 1990*

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COLLEGE FOR KIDS

INTRODUCTION

College for Kids began in Fall 1981 as an after school enrichment program for gifted elementary students, meeting one afternoon for six to eight weeks each semester. Later, enrichment classes for non-gifted students were added, yet the program experienced a declining enrollment. This decline was the impetus for the 1985 needs assessment conducted by Open Campus. One major finding was that students were unable to obtain transportation to the classes due to the increasing number of working mothers. Progressive program changes concentrated on decreasing the school year classes, eliminating the differentiation between gifted and non-gifted classes, and expanding the summer program. By 1987, College for Kids became a summer program only, offered daily from Monday to Friday. Extended care also was added in 1987.

Currently, College for Kids is an enrichment program that offers a unique cross between school work and recreational activities. Without the pressures of homework and grades, students explore academic areas through hands-on, creative activities under the supervision of state certified elementary school teachers. Academic units begin on Monday of each week and end on Friday so that students are able to complete all projects. The program operates from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for nine or ten weeks (depending upon the Pinellas County public school calendar) at five locations throughout the county. Supervision is provided as early as 7:30 a.m., and extended care is available until 5:30 p.m. at three locations. A student may attend one week, all nine or ten weeks, or any combination of weeks at one or more of the sites.

During Fall 1989, St. Petersburg Junior College's Office of Institutional Research surveyed 1,534 parents of participants in the Summer 1989 College for Kids program to learn about their level of satisfaction with the program and its instructors. The return rate, displayed in Table 1, was 38.9 percent. The results were to be disseminated to the program coordinator who would use the data to guide the development of the Summer 1990 program. This was accomplished and changes have been implemented in accordance with parental input.

TABLE 1

Survey Response Rate

Surveys sent	1534
Surveys returned	598
Response rate	38.9%

FINDINGS

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Parents were asked to identify the number of summers their children had attended College for Kids and the number of weeks attended in Summer 1989. Table 2 shows the number and percent of children who attended one to five summers as indicated by their parents.

TABLE 2

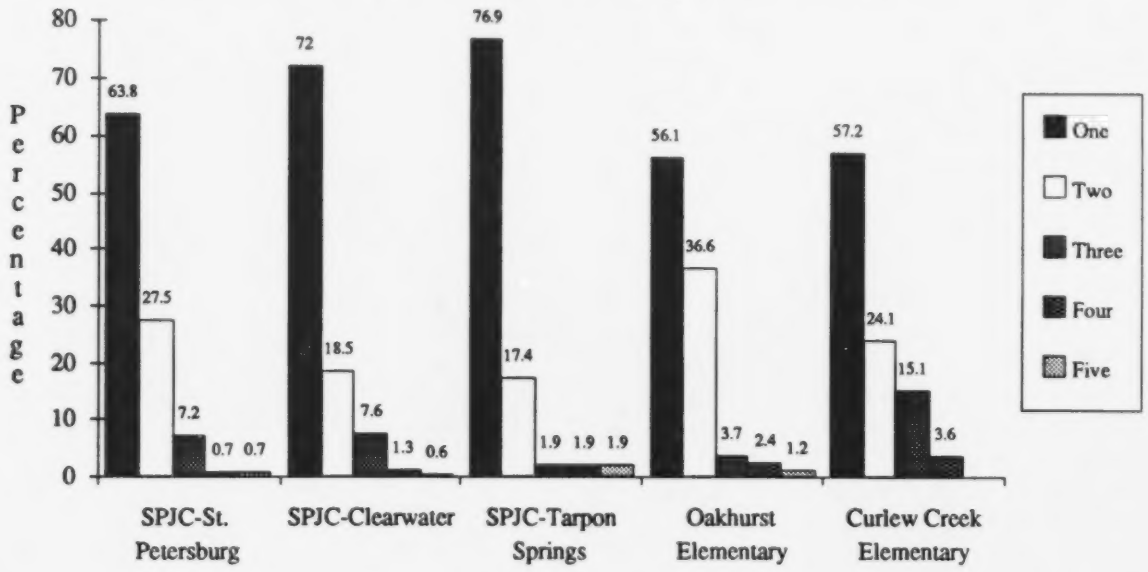
Participation in College for Kids Program

Number of Summers	No. of Parents of Participants	Percent
1	382	64.2
2	146	24.5
3	51	8.6
4	12	2.0
5	4	0.7

The majority (64.2%) of the 595 respondents indicated this was the first summer their child had attended. A review of the data by site showed that the most first time students attended SPJC-Tarpon Springs (76.9%), followed closely by SPJC-Clearwater (72.0%). Graph 1 displays the percentage of students attending from one to five summers by site. Few of the Summer 1989 participants had attended three or more summers (11.3%). More students with long-term program longevity attended Curlew Creek Elementary than any other site.

GRAPH 1

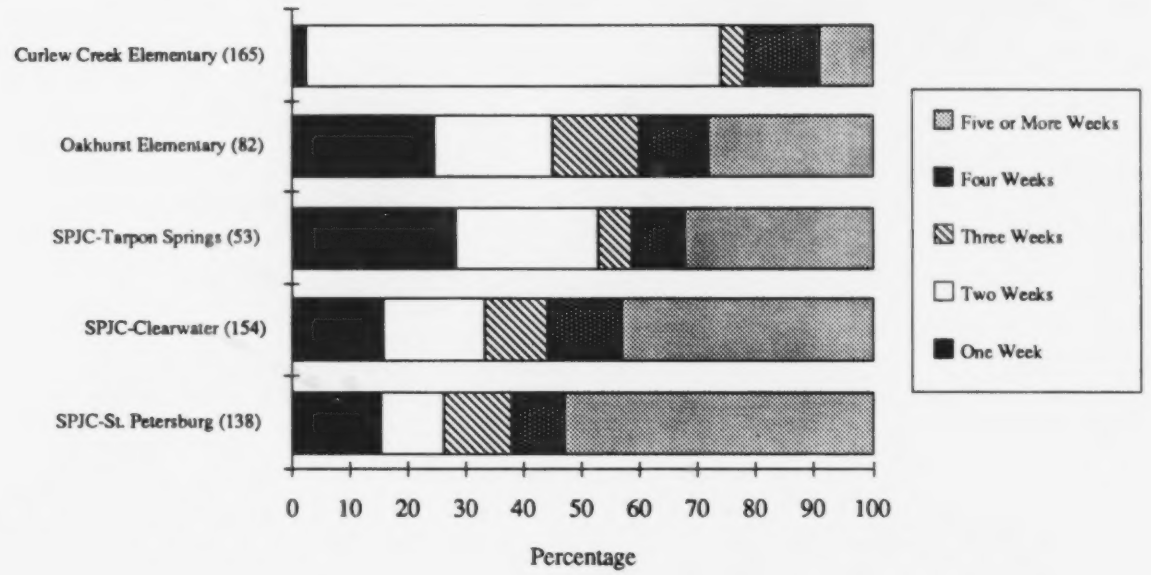
Number of Summers Participated in College for Kids Program by Site Attended



Overall, participants generally attended the program three weeks or less. Graph 2, which displays the percentage of students attending from one to nine weeks by site, shows much variance in participation. The shortest duration was at Curlew Creek Elementary where the majority of students (78.2%) attended two weeks or less while at SPJC-St. Petersburg the majority of students (52.9%) attended five weeks or more.

GRAPH 2

Number of Weeks Participated in College for Kids Program by Site Attended



The most effective recruitment tool was the program brochure mailed directly to the home. Table 3 lists the methods used to inform the community about the program and the number and percent of parents of participants who learned about the program from each contact method.

TABLE 3

Advertisement Methods Used To Inform Community About College For Kids Program

	Number(n=548)	Percent
College for Kids brochure mailed to the home	233	42.5
Child's school sent home information	144	26.3
Another parent, friend or neighbor recommended program	95	17.3
Parent called SPJC for information	28	5.1
Information in the newspaper	20	3.6
Recommend by school teacher or other school personnel	9	1.6
SPJC employee	7	1.3
SPJC notice on bulletin board or brochure on campus	6	1.1
Sibling attended program	2	0.4
Notice in library	2	0.4
Other	2	0.4

The majority of parents (78.9%) indicated that they planned to send their children to College for Kids again during Summer 1990. This finding was consistent across sites. The percentages ranged from a high of 87.3% for Curlew Creek Elementary to a low of 70.3% for SPJC-St. Petersburg. The sex of the child made little difference in this decision. Over three-fourths of parents of children of both sexes (78.6% male, 79.7% female) responded affirmatively.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of student participants were male (52.7%), attended public school (79.4%) during the regular school year, and were aged 6 through 8 years (61.3%). Few participants (8.4%) were aged 11 to 12, the usual ages for middle school attendance. This enrollment pattern was consistent across the sites. Table 4 displays student demographic data by number and percent.

TABLE 4

Age	Number	Percent
6	139	23.5
7	115	19.4
8	109	18.4
9	98	16.6
10	81	13.7
11	38	6.4
12	12	2.0
Total	592	100.0
Gender		
Male	313	52.7
Female	281	47.3
Total	594	100.0
Year Round School		
Public	465	79.4
Private	121	20.6
Total	586	100.0

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

Parents of Summer 1989 participants were asked about their level of satisfaction on items that related to program management, program curriculum, teacher attitudes and student interaction, and student enjoyment.

Demographics of Student Participants

Program Management

Over four-fifths of the parents were very satisfied or satisfied with the brochure describing the program (89.0%), the ease and convenience of the registration process (84.7%), and the program cost (80.5%). Table 5 displays the number and percentage of the parents who selected each response to these items. Little variation in responses was found among sites.

TABLE 5

Level of Satisfaction with Program Management

	Very Satisfactory/ Satisfactory		Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied		Unsatisfactory/ Very Unsatisfactory	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Descriptive Brochure (*n*=588)	523	89.0	38	6.5	27	4.6
Registration Ease & Convenience (*n*=593)	502	84.7	47	7.9	44	7.4
Program Cost(*n*=594)	478	80.5	70	11.8	46	7.7

Program Curriculum

Parents were asked to rate five items related to the curriculum on a scale that ranged from very satisfactory to very unsatisfactory. Table 6 displays the total parent responses. The majority rated very satisfactory or satisfactory the balance between "school" and "fun" activities (89.4%), the variety of topics chosen to explore (89.0%), the match between teaching level and child's level (84.5%), the variation in teaching styles (79.9%), and the organization of the program (82.8%).

TABLE 6

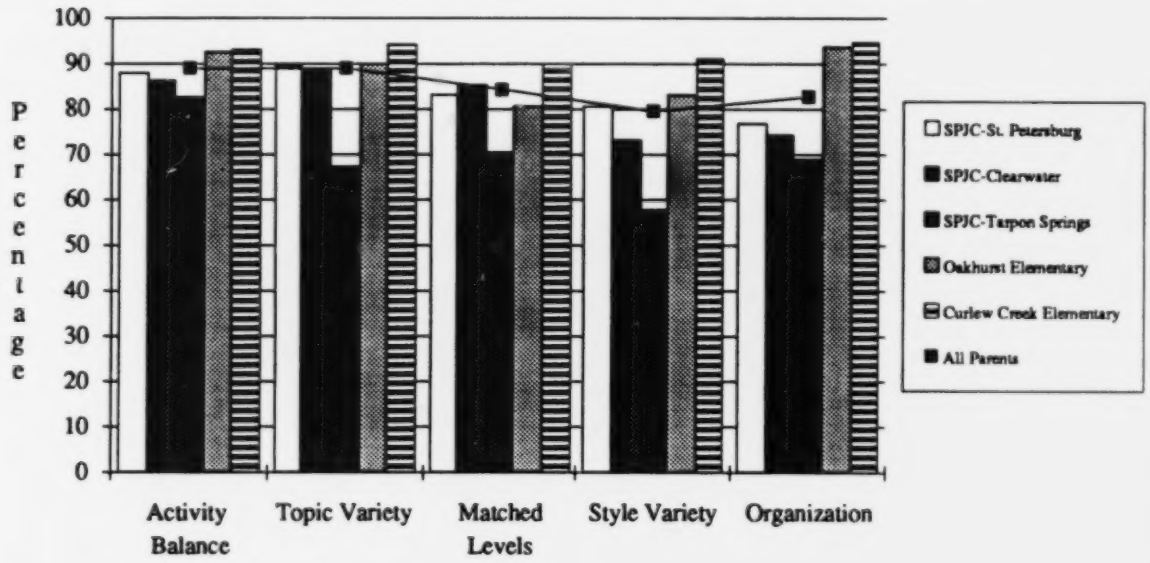
Level of Satisfaction with Program Curriculum

	Very Satisfactory/ Satisfactory		Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied		Unsatisfactory/ Very Unsatisfactory	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Balance of activities (*n*=592)	529	89.4	34	5.7	29	4.9
Variety of topics (*n*=590)	245	89.0	43	7.3	22	3.8
Teaching & child's level match (*n*=588)	497	84.5	65	11.1	26	4.4
Teaching style variation (*n*=573)	458	79.9	93	16.2	22	3.9
Program organization (*n*=589)	488	82.8	62	10.5	39	6.6

Graph 3 compares the sum of the very satisfactory and satisfactory responses by site to those of the total parent group. The most variation in site responses was for three items: the variety of topics chosen to explore (67.3% to 93.4%), variation in teaching styles (58.3% to 91.3%) and organization of the program (69.2% to 93.7%). In each instance the smallest percentage occurred at Tarpon Springs; the largest percentage occurred at Curlew Creek Elementary which had the most satisfactory responses on all five items.

GRAPH 3

Total Parent Satisfactory Responses to Curriculum Items Compared to Site Satisfactory Responses



Additionally, an analysis by age was performed on the items in this section to give some insight into the decrease in participation in the program as student age increases. The majority of parents of students aged six to eleven responded they were very satisfied or satisfied to all items about the curriculum. The majority of parents of students aged twelve gave similar answers to three of the five items. However, less than half (41.7%) of these parents reported they were satisfied with the organization of the program and only one-fourth (25.0%) reported being satisfied with the variation in teaching styles. Table 7 displays the number and percentages of very satisfied and satisfied response to items.

TABLE 7

Satisfaction with Curriculum by Student Age

	Percent of Very Satisfactory/Satisfactory Responses						
	Age 6 (*n*=126)	Age 7 (*n*=99)	Age 8 (*n*=98)	Age 9 (*n*=89)	Age10 (*n*=76)	Age 11 (*n*=34)	Age 12 (*n*=10)
Balance of activities	89.2	86.1	89.9	88.8	93.8	86.8	75.0
Variety of topics	90.6	86.1	87.2	90.8	87.7	89.5	66.7
Teaching & child's level match	84.2	84.3	84.4	86.7	80.2	71.1	83.3
Teaching style variation	78.4	73.9	76.1	82.7	79.0	81.6	25.0
Program Organization	82.0	82.6	80.7	86.7	86.4	73.7	41.7

Teacher Attitudes and Student Interactions

Parents were asked to rate five items related to attitudes and interactions among staff and students. Table 8 displays the number and percentage of the group selecting each response choice. The majority of parents responded very satisfactory or satisfactory to each of the items: the attitude of the teachers toward your child (88.8%); the attitude of the teacher assistants toward your child (82.5%); teacher/ student interaction (83.3%); the interaction of students with one another (79.8%); and the methods used by the teachers to manage discipline or unexpected occurrences (73.1%).

TABLE 8

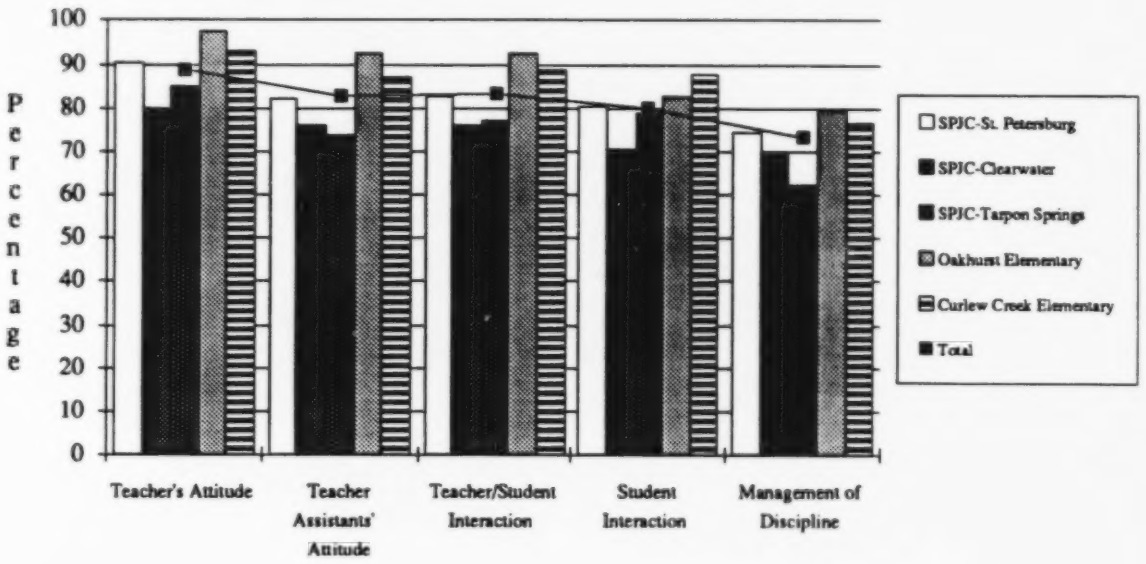
Level of Satisfaction with Teacher Attitude and Interactions

	Very Satisfactory/ Satisfactory		Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied		Unsatisfactory/ Very Unsatisfactory	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Teacher's Attitude (*n*=583)	518	88.8	45	7.7	20	3.4
Teacher Assistant's Attitude (*n*=571)	471	82.5	77	13.5	23	4.0
Teacher/Student Interaction (*n*=576)	480	83.3	67	11.6	29	5.0
Students Interaction (*n*=583)	465	79.8	104	17.8	14	2.4
Management of Discipline (*n*=555)	406	73.1	106	19.1	43	7.7

Graph 4 compares the sum of the very satisfactory and satisfactory responses by site to those of the total group. The site analysis concurred with the all parent analysis in that the majority of parents answered each of the five items favorably. The range of satisfactory responses for the items were: the attitude of the teachers toward your child, (84.6% to 97.5%), the attitude of the teacher assistants toward your child, (74.0% to 92.3%), teacher/student interaction, (75.8% to 92.4%), the interaction of students with one another, (70.5% to 87.7%), and the methods used by the teachers to manage discipline or unexpected occurrences, (62.0% to 79.4%). The satisfactory responses from parents with children who attended Oakhurst Elementary and Curlew Creek Elementary were consistently above the all parent percentage; those from parents with children who attended SPJC-Clearwater and SPJC-Tarpon Springs were consistently below the all parent percentages.

GRAPH 4

Total Parent Satisfactory Responses to Staff Attitudes & Interactions Items Compared to Site Satisfactory Responses



Student Enjoyment

Parents were asked to rate four items related to student enjoyment. Table 9 displays the number and percentage of the group selecting each response choice from very satisfactory to very unsatisfactory. The majority of parents responded very satisfactory or satisfactory to each of the items: the challenge the program presented to your child (81.1%), the emphasis on learning as an enjoyable experience (89.4%), the amount of enjoyment your child expresses while participating in the program (86.6%), and the child's overall enjoyment of the program (89.8%).

TABLE 9

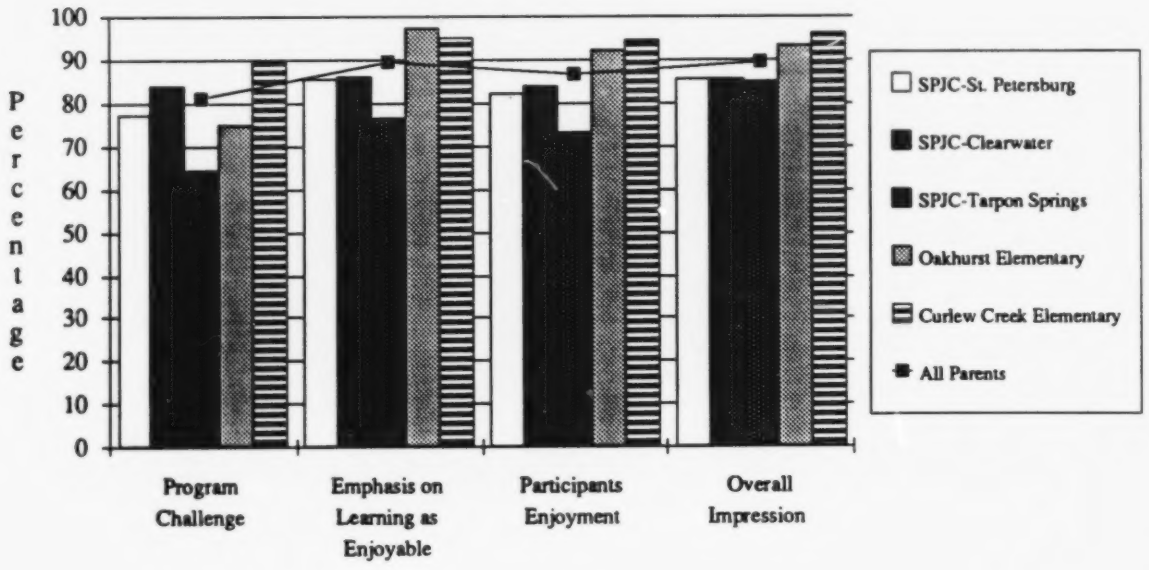
Level of Student Satisfaction with College for Kids

	Very Satisfactory/ Satisfactory		Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied		Unsatisfactory/ Very Unsatisfactory	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Program Challenge (*n*=587)	476	81.1	72	12.3	39	6.7
Learning as Enjoyable (*n*=586)	524	89.4	36	6.1	26	4.4
Participant Enjoyment (*n*=591)	513	86.8	39	6.6	39	6.6
Overall Impression (*n*=589)	529	89.8	32	5.4	28	4.8

Graph 5 compares the sum of the very satisfactory and satisfactory responses by site to those of the total (all parent) group. The majority of responses to the items at each site were favorable. The range of responses were: the challenge the program presented to your child, (64.7% to 89.7%), the emphasis on learning as an enjoyable experience, (76.9% to 97.5%), the amount of enjoyment your child expressed while participating in the program, (73.6% to 94.5%), and overall impression of the program (84.9% to 96.3%). The satisfactory responses from parents with children who attended Curlew Creek Elementary were consistently above the all parent percentage; those from parents with children who attended SPJC-St. Petersburg and SPJC-Tarpon Springs consistently below the all parent percentages.

GRAPH 5

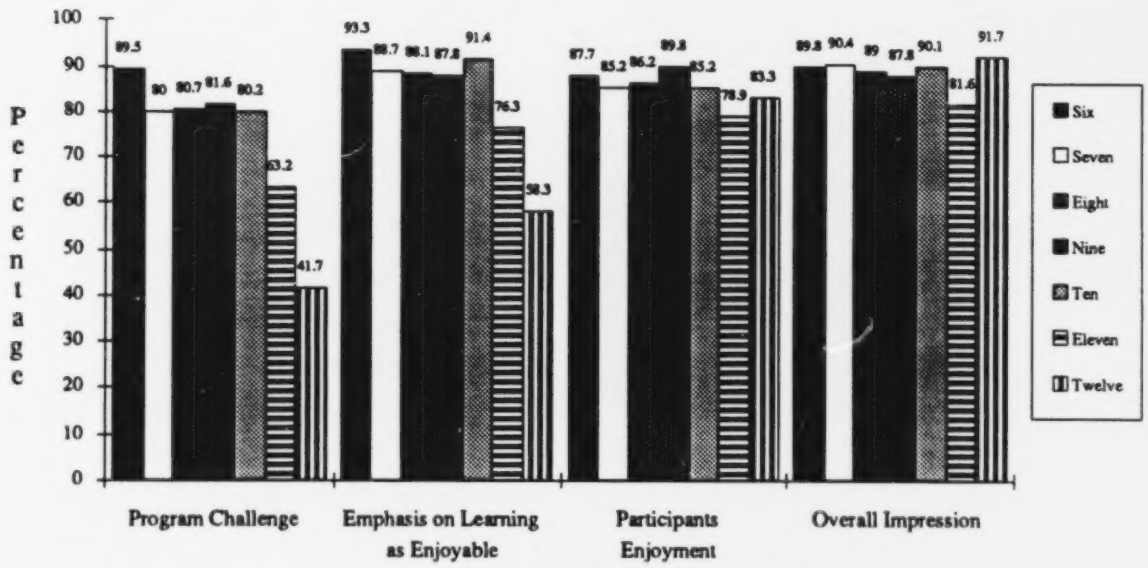
Total Parent Satisfactory Responses to Student Enjoyment Items Compared to Site Satisfactory Responses



An analysis by age of students was performed on the parents' responses to items under this section to learn if lack of student enjoyment might be responsible for the decrease in participation as student age increases. The percentage of satisfied responses from parents with children under eleven to the challenge the program presented to your child ranged from 80.0% to 89.5%, while the percentages for parents of eleven and twelve year olds were 63.2% and 41.7%. Similarly, to the emphasis on learning as an enjoyable experience, the range was 87.8% to 93.3% compared to 76.3% and 58.3%, respectively. However, the percentage of satisfied responses to the overall impression of the program was highest for parents of twelve year olds (91.7%) and although lowest for parents of eleven year olds at (81.6%) did not deviate sharply from the responses of parents with younger children (from 87.8% to 90.4%). Graph 6 shows the percentage of responses for each parent group to the four items. Little difference was found in satisfaction with the overall program among parents of male students (88.3%) and parents of female students (91.3%).

GRAPH 6

Parent Satisfactory Responses Compared by Student Age to Student Enjoyment Items



EXTENDED CARE

Extended care was available at the three college sites after the regular program. Table 10 shows that the overall percentage of parents who regularly used this service was 25.4%. An additional 5.7% of the parents sometimes used extended care. A site analysis showed that the percentage of parents who used this service least sent their children to Oakhurst (1.3%) and Curlew Creek (2.4%) elementary schools (no on-site programs at these locations); those who used it most frequently, to SPJC-St. Petersburg (45.7%) and SPJC-Clearwater (43.9%). Cost of the extended care did not appear to be a factor in the decision to use extended care. The majority of parents (78.5%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the cost of the extended care.

TABLE 10

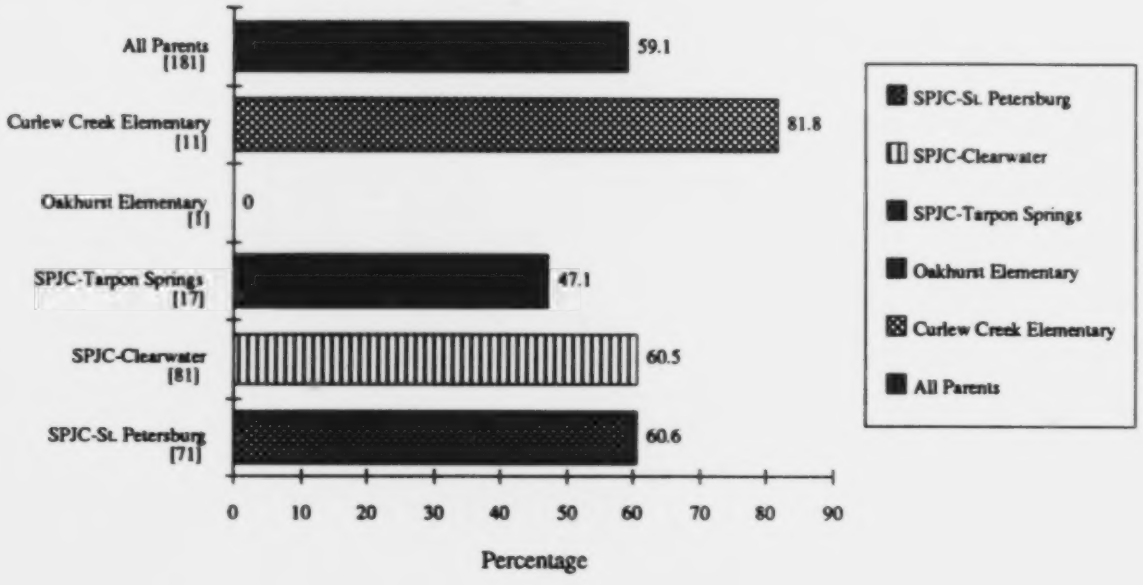
Student Participation in Extended Care

	SPJC - St. Petersburg		SPJC - Clearwater		SPJC - Tarpon Springs		Oakhurst Elementary		Curlew Creek Elementary		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	63	45.7	69	43.9	14	26.4	1	1.3	4	2.4	151	25.4
No	65	47.1	75	47.8	34	64.2	78	97.5	157	94.6	409	68.9
Sometimes	10	7.2	13	8.3	5	9.4	1	1.3	5	3.0	34	5.7
Total	138	100.0	157	100.0	53	100.0	80	100.1	166	100.0	594	100.0

Graph 7 compares the very satisfactory and satisfactory responses of the total parent group by site of program attendance for the activities provided during "extended care." The majority of the all parent group (59.1%), and parents at SPJC - St. Petersburg (60.6%), and SPJC - Clearwater (60.5%) were satisfied with the activities provided. A small number of parents of Curlew Creek participants transported their children to other sites for extended care and the majority (81.8%) were satisfied with the activities.

GRAPH 7

Total Parent Satisfactory Responses to Extended Care Activities Compared to Site Satisfactory Responses



PARENT COMMENTS

Parents were invited to make additional comments about the program, including what their child most like or disliked and suggestions for future years. An overwhelming number of comments about the program were positive. Parents reiterated that their children enjoyed College for Kids, even when they had encountered problems or made suggestions for improving the program.

Activities the students most liked were French, Alphabet Soup, science (Living in Space, rocketry, sea animals, oceanography) and computers, although parents would have preferred instruction in computer literacy and software emphasizing learning of facts as opposed to video games. Several parents encouraged more variation from year to year and the exploration of new topics in the future. They emphasized continued exploration of science topics taken from physics, biology and astronomy; foreign language, including the re-introduction of Spanish; and creative activities in art, music, dance, and drama, as well as the study of famous paintings and music appreciation. The recommendations consistently addressed the teaching of skills not generally taught in school (magic, karate, puppet making and performance ballet) or usually not taught until secondary school (typing, creative writing and journalism).

Parents recognized that in order to minimize the atmosphere of school, a delicate balance must be maintained between structured and unstructured experiences. Learning activities should concentrate on organized hands-on learning adventures and field trips rather than information given through lectures and desk work. In order to implement participatory learning, the parents encouraged communication with them by sending home products that were produced by the child or through detailed descriptive information on the topics and tasks in which the child would participate with, perhaps, some indication of the progress the child has made. Further, they recommended a reduction in student-teacher ratios and careful selection of sensitive instructors who were comfortable teaching in a relaxed atmosphere and who were experienced in maintaining order in a non-traditional classroom. Smaller classes, additionally, would reduce the apparent lack of organization and discipline problems experienced during the first few weeks of the program. Also, with fewer children to supervise, more security could be maintained when children were picked up after the program and after extended care.

Parents requested that students be grouped by grade rather than age, that beginners and advanced levels of topics be developed, that deviations from the brochure describing the week's events be minimized, and that the organization of the daily activities be reviewed keeping in mind the weather and time appropriateness of events. Permission for lunch in air conditioned rooms and the need to substitute indoor physical education activities for outside games on hot days were specifically mentioned. More organized indoor physical activities such as gymnastics, dance, and table tennis were recommended as a release of excess energy.

Parents requested more structured activities and supervision during extended care. Parents who sent their children to the elementary school sites requested that extended care be implemented at all sites.

Few parents commented on the program cost. However, those that did requested that the application fee be reduced or that a portion be applied to the first week of tuition, that payment of the application fee guarantee availability of a program slot, that payment by mail be a viable option and that

a family plan be developed that would provide discounts so all eligible children in the family might attend.

CONCLUSION

The College for Kids program has undergone many permutations since its inception in Fall 1981. From an after school enrichment program for the gifted elementary students, the program has evolved into a summer program suitable for all students from ages six through twelve. During Fall 1989, the parents of the previous summer's participants were surveyed with regard to their level of satisfaction with program management, program curriculum, teacher attitudes and student interaction, and student enjoyment.

The major findings of the study are summarized below:

1) Over three-fourths of the parents indicated their child had attended one or two summers.

2) Overall, participants attended the program three weeks or less.

3) Almost two-thirds of the participants were aged six through eight years.

4) Over three-fourths of the parents planned to send their child to College for Kids in the Summer of 1990.

5) More than four-fifths of the parents were satisfied with the program management (the descriptive program brochure, the registration process and the program cost).

6) The majority of parents were pleased with the program curriculum. More than four-fifths rated program organization, the balance and variety of activities, and the match between the curriculum and the child's ability, satisfactory; more than three-fourths rated the variation in teaching styles satisfactory.

7) Four-fifths or more of the parents rated the attitude and interaction of teachers and teacher assistants with the child satisfactory; a little less than three-fourths rated the methods used for discipline management satisfactory.

8) Over four-fifths of the parent group as a whole felt their child had enjoyed the program. An analysis by age performed in an attempt to explain the decrease in participation as student age increases yielded no conclusive results. The percentage of satisfied responses to the overall impression of the program was highest for parents of twelve year olds and, although lowest for parents of eleven year olds, did not deviate sharply from the range of responses of parents with younger children.

9) About one-fourth of the parents regularly used the extended care service and a little more than half of these parents were satisfied with extended care activities.

QUESTIONS

1) Would the development by each teacher of a three year plan of activities, ensuring the exploration of different topics, encourage longevity among program participants?

2) Might the rotation of teachers among campuses, on a two or three week basis, provide more variation in subjects explored on each site in any one summer?

3) Would an arrangement whereby participants in College for Kids exchanged places for an hour with participants in the Summer Sports Camps, providing a release of energy for the academic participants and a hands-on academic experience for the Sports Camp participants, improve and expand the scope of both programs and increase the number of participants?

Please direct questions or comments about this Educational Abstract or suggestions for future issues to Susanne Fischer, director of Institutional Research, Institutional and Program Planning, District Office.

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